

### REMARKS

Independent claims 1 and 6 have been amended to include the limitation previously recited in dependent claims 3 and 8, now cancelled.

New claims 11 and 12 have been added. Support for these claims may be found, for instance, in Figs. 1 and 2.

With these amendments, claims 1-2, 4-7, 9, and 11-12 are pending in this application, of which claims 1, 6, 11, and 12 are independent.

### 35 U.S.C. § 103 Rejections

#### *Independent claim 1*

Claims 1-2 and 4-5 are rejected as being unpatentable over Mazzacano (EP 0 870 970) in view of Hafeli (US 5,909,854). We submit, however, that neither Mazzacano nor Hafeli, alone or in any proper combination, discloses or suggests a connecting piece comprising, among other features, at least one gripping element, “the gripping element formed of two or more ribs disposed circumferentially around the connecting piece,” as recited in amended independent claim 1.

In the Final Office Action dated December 1, 2008, the Examiner equated Mazzacano’s adapter body 106 with the claimed at least one gripping element and further stated that Fig. 2 of Mazzacano shows a gripping element formed of two or more ribs disposed circumferentially around the connecting piece. However, Mazzacano’s adapter body is not formed of ribs disposed *circumferentially* around the adapter. Rather, at most, Mazzacano’s adapter body may have ribs that are oriented along the axis of the adapter. Therefore, Mazzacano does not describe the newly added feature “the gripping element formed of two or more ribs disposed circumferentially around the connecting piece,” as recited in amended claim 1.

Hafeli describes a self-locking nut. Hafeli’s self-locking nut is not formed of ribs disposed circumferentially around a connecting piece. Indeed, Hafeli’s self-locking nut is not formed of ribs at all. At most, Hafeli discloses only a structure with flanges at each end of the nut. Thus, Hafeli does not describe the newly added feature “the gripping

element formed of two or more ribs disposed circumferentially around the connecting piece,” as recited in amended claim 1.

We therefore submit that neither Mazzacano nor Hafeli, alone or in any proper combination, discloses or suggests a connecting piece comprising, among other features, at least one gripping element, “the gripping element formed of two or more ribs disposed circumferentially around the connecting piece,” as recited in amended claim 1.

For at least this reason, independent claim 1 is patentable over Mazzacano and Hafeli, alone or in any proper combination. Since claims 2 and 4-5 depend from claim 1, these claims are patentable for at least the same reason claim 1 is patentable.

*Independent claim 6*

Claims 6-7 and 9 are rejected as being unpatentable over Rafeld (German Patent No. G 89 08 805.0) in view of Hafeli. We submit, however, that neither Rafeld nor Hafeli, alone or in any proper combination, discloses or suggests a connecting piece comprising, among other features, at least one gripping element, “the gripping element formed of two or more ribs disposed circumferentially around the connecting piece,” as recited in amended independent claim 6.

In the Final Office Action of December 1, 2008, the Examiner equated feature 6 shown in Rafeld’s Fig. 2 with the claimed at least one gripping element and further stated that Fig. 2 of Rafeld shows a gripping element formed of two or more ribs disposed circumferentially around the connecting piece. Rafeld describes a plastic connecting piece 8 having a metal insert 6. However, even assuming Rafeld’s metal insert 6 is a gripping element, which we do not concede, Rafeld’s metal insert 6 is not formed of two or more ribs disposed circumferentially around the connecting piece 8. That is, there are no ribs disposed circumferentially around Rafeld’s connecting piece 8. Rather, at most Rafeld describes ribs around metal insert 6 *within* connecting piece 8. Therefore, Rafeld does not describe the newly added limitation “the gripping element formed of two or more ribs disposed circumferentially around the connecting piece,” as recited in amended claim 1.

Hafeli describes a self-locking nut. Hafeli's self-locking nut is not formed of ribs disposed circumferentially around a connecting piece. Indeed, Hafeli's self-locking nut is not formed of ribs at all. At most, Hafeli discloses only a structure with flanges at each end of the nut. Therefore, Hafeli does not describe the newly added limitation "the gripping element formed of two or more ribs disposed circumferentially around the connecting piece," as recited in amended claim 1.

We therefore submit that neither Rafeld nor Hafeli, alone or in any proper combination, disclose or suggest a connecting piece comprising, among other features, at least one gripping element, "the gripping element formed of two or more ribs disposed circumferentially around the connecting piece," as recited in amended claim 1.

For at least this reason, independent claim 6 is patentable over Rafeld and Hafeli, alone or in any proper combination. Since claims 7 and 9 depend from claim 6, these claims are patentable for at least the same reason claim 6 is patentable.

### Conclusion

It is believed that all of the pending claims have been addressed. However, the absence of a reply to a specific rejection, issue or comment does not signify agreement with or concession of that rejection, issue or comment. In addition, because the arguments made above may not be exhaustive, there may be reasons for patentability of any or all pending claims (or other claims) that have not been expressed. Finally, nothing in this paper should be construed as an intent to concede any issue with regard to any claim, except as specifically stated in this paper, and the amendment of any claim does not necessarily signify concession of unpatentability of the claim prior to its amendment.

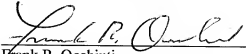
The Request for Continued Examination fee in the amount of \$810 and the Petition for Extension of Time fee in the amount of \$490 are being paid concurrently herewith on the Electronic Filing System (EFS) by way of Deposit Account authorization. Please apply any other charges or credits to Deposit Account No. 50-4189, referencing Attorney Docket No. 46401-016US1.

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Respectfully submitted,

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